

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

- 1 1. A method of relieving stress in a fabric, comprising the steps of:  
2 providing a fabric having at least three layers;  
3 feeding the fabric along a pathway;  
4 applying a tension to the fabric in a direction substantially  
5 perpendicular to the pathway;  
6 heating the fabric; and  
7 removing the tension from the fabric in the direction substantially  
8 perpendicular to the pathway.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein a tentering frame is used for  
2 applying tension to the fabric in the direction substantially perpendicular  
3 to the pathway.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the steps of:  
2 before heating, applying a tension to the fabric in a direction  
3 substantially parallel to the pathway; and  
4 after heating, removing the tension from the fabric in the direction  
5 substantially perpendicular to the pathway.
- 1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein the fabric comprises a window  
2 covering including first and second sheets of material coupled to each  
3 other by a plurality of vanes.

1 5. The method of claim 4, wherein each side of the tentering frame  
2 contacts the respective substantially opposite edges of the first and  
3 second sheets of sheer material.

1 6. The method of claim 3, wherein a nip system is used for applying  
2 the tension to the window covering in the direction substantially parallel  
3 to the pathway.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the nip system includes a plurality  
2 of nips along the pathway for contacting the window covering.

1 8. The method of claim 7, further comprising the step of carrying the  
2 window covering along the pathway with a drive belt assembly.

1 9. A system for relieving stress in a three-dimensional window  
2 covering, comprising:

3 a tentering frame for applying tension to a three-dimensional  
4 window covering in a first direction; and

5 a plurality of heating elements located along the tentering frame for  
6 heating the window covering,

7 wherein the tentering frame carries the window covering while  
8 under tension in the first direction along a pathway adjacent to the  
9 heating elements.

1 10. The system of claim 9, further comprising a plurality of nip units  
2 along the pathway for applying tension to the window covering in a  
3 second direction.

1 11. The system of claim 10, wherein the heating elements comprise a  
2 first plurality of heating elements on a first side of the pathway and  
3 second plurality of heating elements on a second side of the pathway  
4 substantially opposite the first side of the pathway.

1 12. The system of claim 11, wherein the first and second pluralities of  
2 heating elements each comprise three heating elements.

1 13. The system of claim 11, wherein the window covering comprises a  
2 first sheer material and a second sheer material coupled to each other by  
3 at least one vane, the first and second sheer materials having first and  
4 second edges located substantially parallel to the pathway, and wherein  
5 the tenting frame applies tension to the window covering in the first  
6 direction by contacting the first edge of the first sheer material and the  
7 second edge of the second sheer material.

1 14. The system of claim 11, further comprising a platen located  
2 between the first and second pluralities of heating elements, wherein the  
3 window covering contacts the platen as the window covering is carried  
4 by the tenting frame.

1 15. The system of claim 9, further comprising a conveyor belt along the  
2 pathway adjacent to the heating elements for carrying the window  
3 covering across the platen.

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- 1 16. A method of relieving stress in a three-dimensional fabric,  
2 comprising the steps of:  
3 providing a three-dimensional fabric comprises multiple materials;  
4 feeding the fabric along a pathway;  
5 tensioning the fabric in a first direction;  
6 applying heat to the fabric as the fabric travels along the pathway;  
7 and  
8 removing the tension from the fabric in the first direction.
- 1 17. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of:  
2 tensioning the fabric in a second direction substantially  
3 perpendicular to the first direction; and  
4 removing the tension from the fabric in the second direction.
- 1 18. The method of claim 16, wherein a tentering frame along the  
2 pathway is used for tensioning the fabric in the first direction.
- 1 19. The method of claim 17, wherein a plurality of nip units along the  
2 pathway are used for tensioning the fabric in the second direction.
- 1 20. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of carrying the  
2 fabric via a conveyor belt along at least a portion of the pathway.

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